



Haughton Park Pump Track and Associated Facilities

Feasibility Study

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1. Introduction and Background

CRContracting (CRC) and Collective Trax (CTX) are very pleased to have carried out this feasibility study for what is a target project for the Friends of Haughton Park (FOHP) group. This project, led by the FOHP, forms an integral part of the group's overall mission to protect, promote and enhance Haughton Country Park, a much-loved feature of Alford village. It is centred around the creation of a Pump Track and associated facilities, that will provide a focal point for participants of a range of wheeled sports from the village, as well as attracting visitors to the village from further afield. The Community Consultation and Feasibility Study has been undertaken thanks to a National Lottery Award from the National Lottery Community Fund.

The FOHP group are now a Registered Scottish Charity (SCIO - SC050146) and have done much work in getting the project to this stage, including their own investigations and interpretations of how the facilities might be laid out and what they might include. They have also identified various potential funding streams, as well as starting to raise both, awareness of the project locally, and some project funding. After a competitive tendering exercise, the team of CRContracting and Collective Trax were commissioned to carry out this feasibility study.

The Feasibility Study will look in detail at the site, and suggested location within it for the Pump Track and associated facilities, assessing all aspects of their positioning from the user's perspective, as well as from a practical viewpoint regarding construction and future maintenance. It will make recommendations as to what associated facilities would best complement the Pump Track, and it will examine how they will interact with the other park infrastructure, local amenities, and the communities of Alford and the surrounding area. A Community Consultation exercise will be carried out to assess the level of support for the proposals, and following this, the study will provide assessment of the likely user numbers, the potential benefits of creating the facilities, and an estimate of the costs for doing so.



What is a Pump Track?

Pump Tracks are great for anyone on wheels! They are designed to suit a wide range from skateboards, scooters and BMXs through to full size mountain bikes. The combination of rollers and banked turns (called berms), allow users to generate speed and maintain momentum, whilst developing key skills.

The design allows riders to progress, gain confidence and develop from gently rolling, to being able to jump between rollers on the same track. This means a child on a balance bike can experience the same features as a professional mountain biker.



Image 1: A Pump Track

2. Study Methodology

The study began with an inception meeting with the FOHP group. This allowed the consultants to discuss the feasibility process more fully with FOHP group, and gain further understanding of the FOHP group's aspirations for the project. The proposed process and timescales were then agreed shortly after the inception meeting.

A period of desk research then followed, with a wide array of national, regional, and local strategies, policies and reports (see list in Appendix A) being identified and assessed, with a view to determining their relevance to the project. The results of this research are summarised in Section 4 of this report.

The consultants made multiple visits to Alford during May and June 2021 to conduct initial site assessments, and to meet stakeholders. The outcomes of these visits are detailed in section 5 and informed much of the conceptual facility layout in section 6.

A community consultation was carried out over the summer which described the proposals and provided visual representations of the conceptual project. This was carried out predominantly online, where a web-based presentation was created that included the opportunity for visitors to provide their feedback through a project questionnaire. In addition, simpler versions of the presentation were created as posters and members of the community could provide feedback via a paper based questionnaire to ensure that not having access to the internet wasn't a barrier to getting involved.

The FOHP group were instrumental in promoting the consultation around the community and ensuring that as wide a range of people were consulted as possible. This included gathering responses and opinions from people out with Alford, in the Aberdeenshire region.

Analyses of the results of the community consultation was then undertaken and combined with an objective assessment of the project benefits in section 7. Finally, an estimated project cost was prepared, and conclusions made which the FOHP group can take forward in the wider development of Haughton Park.

3. Local, Regional and National Context

National Facilities

In terms of mountain biking facilities specifically, Scotland is developing a solid range of facilities across the country, and the Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019-2025 (DMBinS) describes the future planned developments.

The map below, although not exhaustive where the smaller facilities are concerned, does give a good impression of the spread of mountain bike facilities across the country.

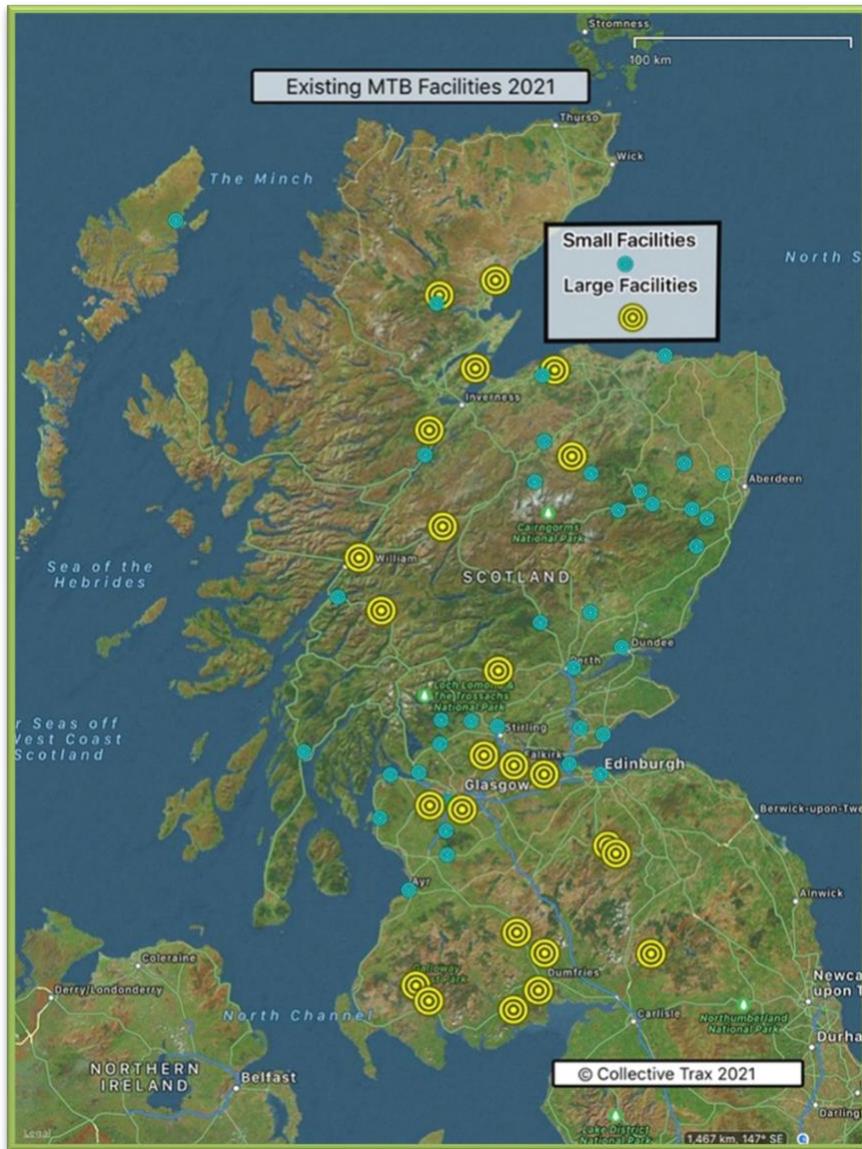


Image 2: Mountain Bike Facilities 2021. Note that Large Facilities equates to >10KMs of purpose-built trails. This includes some projects that are not yet completed but does not include unofficial or unsanctioned trail networks.

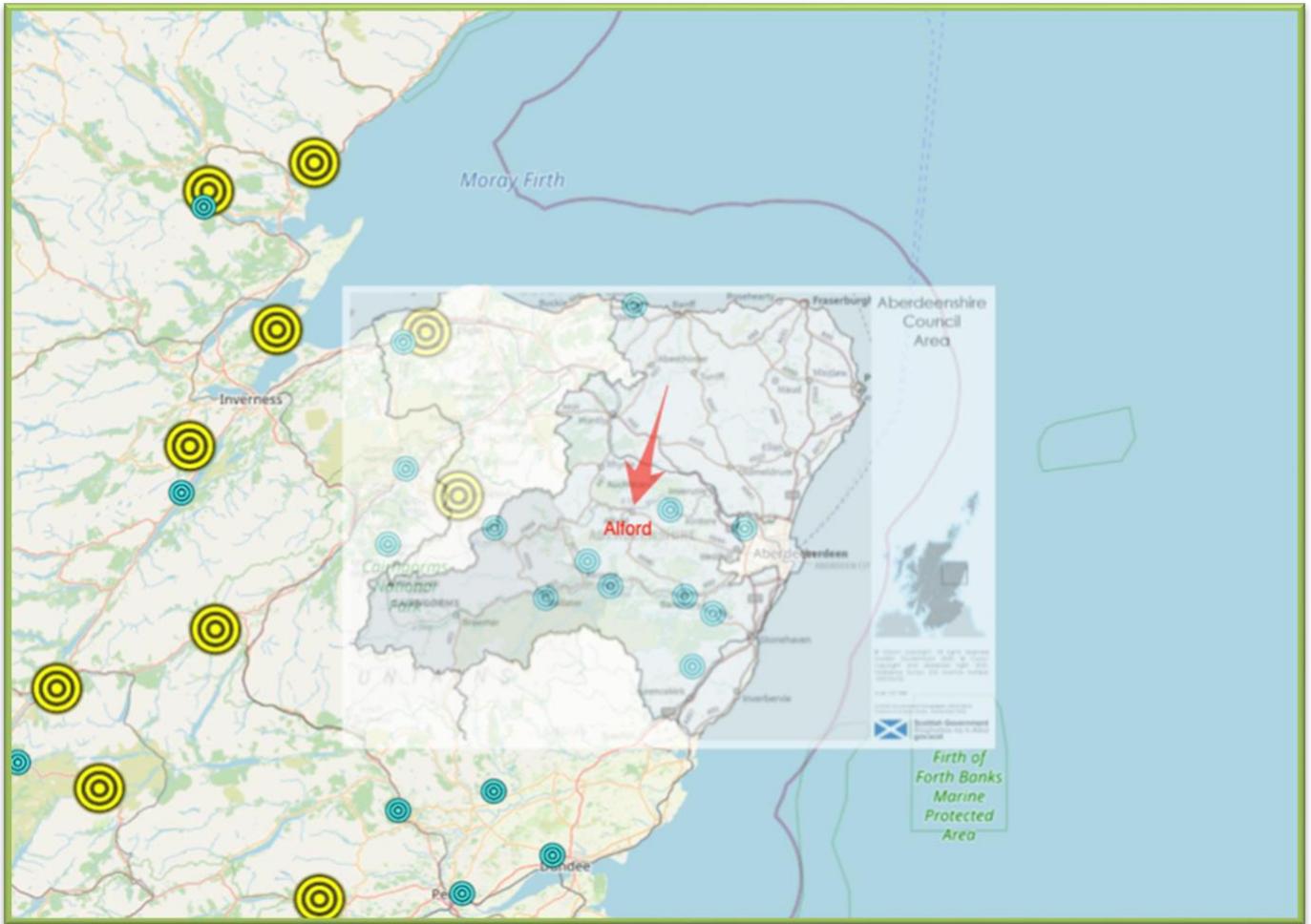


Image 3: Overlay of Aberdeenshire Council Area Courtesy of the Scottish Government, Showing Alford Location

Overlaying a map of the Aberdeenshire Council Area helps to give context to the spread of these small scale facilities within Aberdeenshire.

What can be seen from the map is the lack of any large scale purpose built facility in Aberdeenshire, within easy reach of the majority of the population of the region. The nearest is Glenlivet – 64 miles and almost 2 hours driving from Aberdeen City. However, the map does show that a good cluster of smaller facilities is developing in Aberdeenshire, based around smaller community projects in various towns, much like this proposal. It is worth emphasizing that this map includes planned facilities as well as those in existence. Also, that the marked facility directly to the east of Alford is Pitfichie Downhill Trail – a very different type of facility to that proposed by this project.

Aberdeenshire is indeed listed in the Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking as an 'Emerging Destination', based around this cluster model (more of which in the Tourism section below), and the creation of one or more larger bike park facilities.

Pump Tracks

When considering Pump Tracks specifically, the picture is rather different. This is to be expected as Pump Tracks as we have come to know them, with an asphalt surface designed for all types wheeled equipment rather than just mountain bikes and BMX, are a relatively new innovation.

The map below shows the distribution of asphalt surfaced Pump Tracks across Scotland.



Image 4: This does not include Pump Tracks with dirt surfaces

What can be clearly seen is that there is no provision for this type of facility north of the Central Belt, with the one exception of Inverness Pump Track. As noted in the caption, this map does not include any public dirt-surfaced Pump Tracks, of which there are 2 in Aberdeenshire – one at Tarland, and another very small one at Auchenblae, both of which were constructed by ourselves.

There are however plans at various phases of development for Pump Tracks to be built at Ellon, Banchory, and at a couple of sites in Aberdeen city. Combined together, these should start to provide the basis for a good spread of facilities across the region providing reasonably easy access for a very large number of potential users.

A Pump Track of modest scale could be expected to regularly attract users from within a 30 minute driving time over the longer term. What is notable is that due to the rural nature of much of Aberdeenshire, this drive time reaches to the fringes of some of the larger towns in the area. Adding just 5 minutes to the drive time includes these, namely: Inverurie, Kintore, Westhill, Banchory, Aboyne, and Huntly. The two maps below compare these findings.

Drive time from Alford = 30 minutes

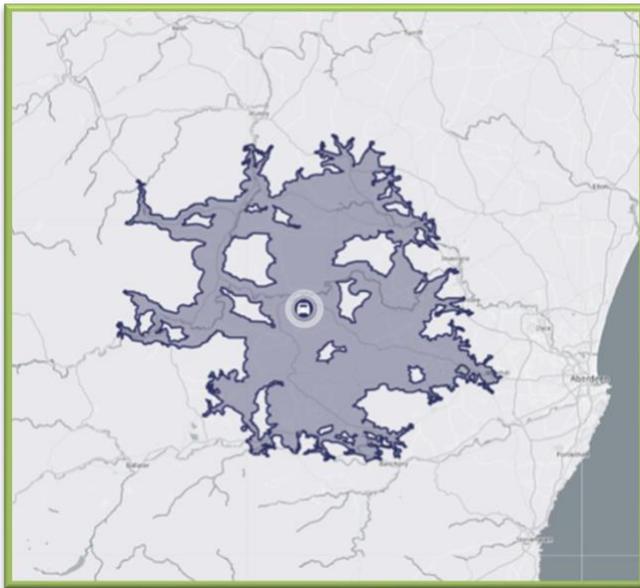


Image 5: Map created with Traveltime API

Drive time from Alford = 35 minutes

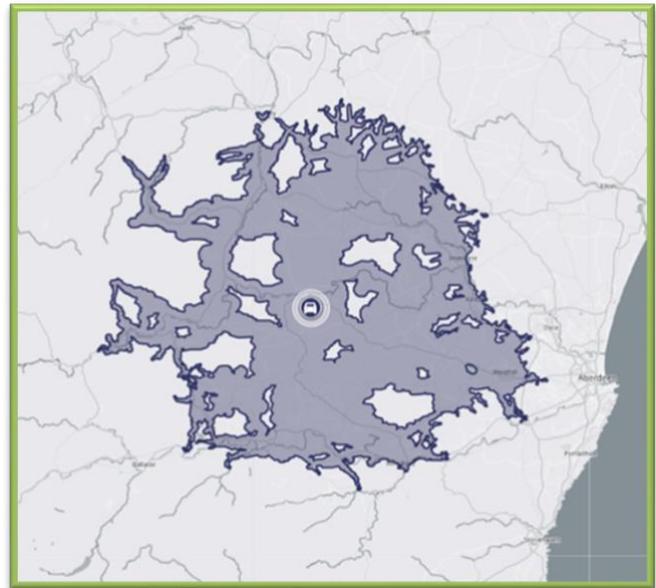


Image 6: Map created with Traveltime API

Given the lack of other comparable facilities, and that people living in rural areas like Aberdeenshire habitually drive further to reach a destination, we feel that it is a reasonable assumption that people from within these towns would regularly travel to Alford to use a Pump Track.

It is also reasonable to predict a 'novelty effect' during the first months of a Pump Track opening, where users might travel much further to try it out. This effect is likely to be particularly exaggerated in this case given the lack of comparable facilities in the north of Scotland. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that users are still willing to travel many hours to reach the Pump Track at Inverness (a large-scale facility), several years after it was opened.

A 1-hour drive time covers the majority of the population of Aberdeenshire as well as Aberdeen city, so the town of Alford could reasonably expect something of a rush of users over the first summer of opening.

However, this is to be understood in context. Given the strategic ambitions of the Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019 - 2025, alongside the desired strategic outcomes of other stakeholders listed in the Policy Context section, the likelihood is that the Pump Track map above will look significantly different in 5 years' time.

Shops and Other Relevant Amenities

An online search reveals 11 independent bike shops listed for Aberdeenshire, with a further 4 large chain bike shops in Aberdeen city. There are also 5 independent bicycle repair companies listed across the city and shire, with one of these are in Alford itself. Catering for all types of cyclist, their various social media channels show a full range of different types of bike being sold and maintained.

There are no stretches of National Cycle Route that pass through Alford, and few core paths in the area out-with those in Haughton Park and Murray Park. Creation of an improved and joined up path network for walking and cycling is mentioned as a Key Project for Action in the Community Action Plan for Alford. Cycling activity has seen a large increase in the area in recent years, in line with the rest of the country, but the lack of traffic free routes means that cyclists are forced onto public roads, which could be a barrier to further participation, particularly for younger and/or less experienced riders.

Due to its small size and rural location, Alford does benefit from a large amount of greenspace within the easy access of the town, as shown on the map below.

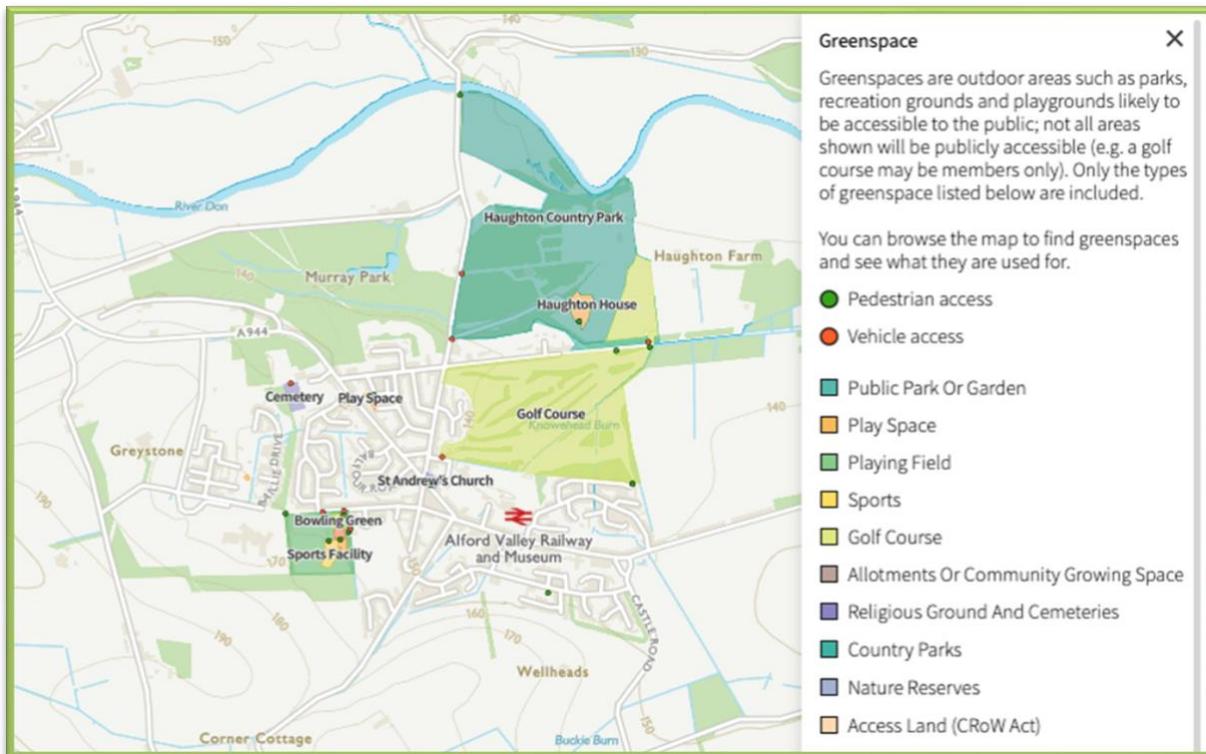


Image 7: Sustrans & Ordnance Survey Greenspace Map

Haughton Park currently hosts a large play area and informal football goal posts, these facilities are listed as in need of rejuvenation as part of the Community Action Plan for Alford. At the other side of the village, the recreation ground hosts a dry ski slope and skate bowl. This skateboarding facility has been designed and built with some features that make it particularly challenging to use, and not very inclusive for the novice skater. Hence historically, it has been little used until the last 18 months during the Covid-19 pandemic. Anecdotal reports suggest that the skate bowl has seen a large number of young people on skateboards, scooters and bikes using the facility during this period.

The recreation ground also hosts a playpark, tennis courts and a bowling green. However, there are no other suitable areas for wheeled sports to take place in this area.

The Community campus does include some traffic free paths around the sports pitches as well as that could be used for informal cycling or scooting by young people out-with school hours.

The Grampian Transport Museum has an asphalt circuit that is used for shows and events involving vehicles. This is private and can be hired for specific events by arrangement, but is central in the village and easily accessible. The Transport Museum has been an important part of the community in recent years prior to the Covid pandemic and has been actively involved in cycling events, hosting the event village for the KT Bike Run.

It was not part of the scope of work for this feasibility study to investigate suitability or otherwise of sites other than Haughton Park for locating the proposed facilities within the village.

Participation

Participation levels for cycling in Aberdeenshire are high, in fact Aberdeenshire has the highest percentage of homes with access to one or more bikes for private use (50%) in Scotland. It is home to Scotland's largest cycling club in Deeside Thistle. An online search reveals some 28 cycling clubs listed for Aberdeenshire and city. Many of these are predominantly based around road cycling, but some cover other types of cycling and many specifically mention youth sections.

The heatmap from Strava.com below emphasizes this point. Each time a user records a ride, a tracklog is recorded as a red line. As more lines build up the colour becomes 'hotter' or brighter. This shows that on a national level, Aberdeenshire records a similar number of rides to the much more densely populated areas of the central belt of Scotland. (Note that the heatmap does not distinguish between types of cycling, rather it shows all cycling activity)

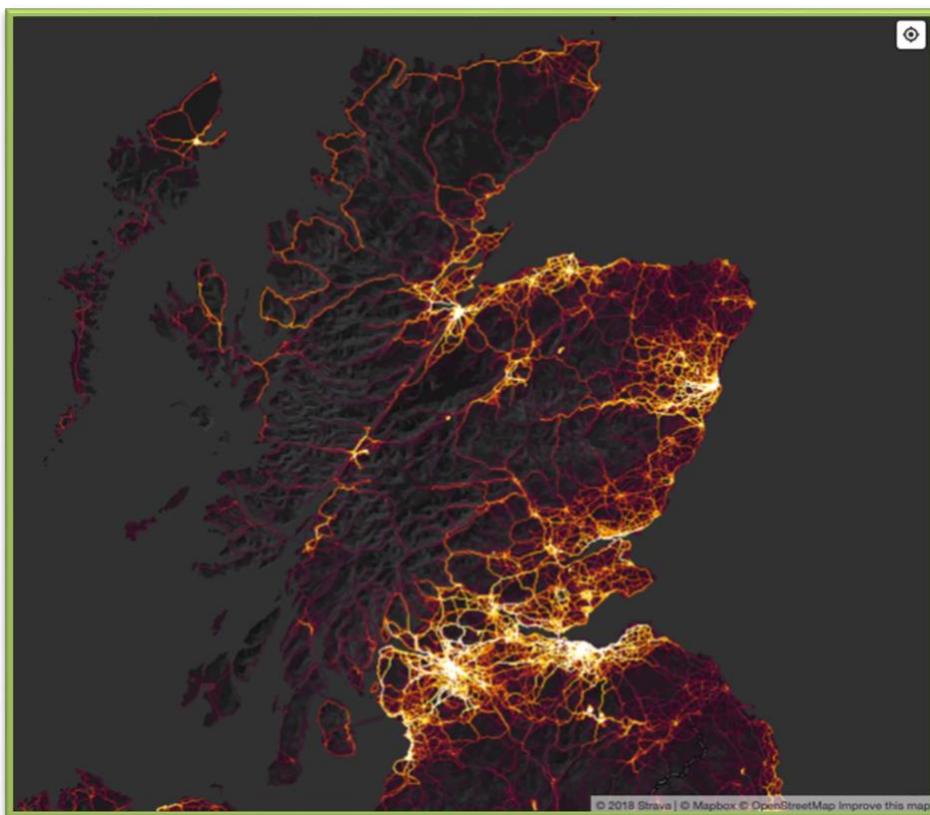


Image 8: Heatmap produced by Strava.com

In support of this level of participation, there are 8 coaching companies listed online, covering all disciplines between them, right down to Balance Bike specific coaching for toddlers. Meanwhile at a local authority level, 85.2% of Aberdeenshire primary schools were delivering L2 Bikeability Scotland training in 2020. This number appears quite high but is in context less than many regions where the training is delivered in 100% of primary schools.

Active Schools Alford do not currently offer any wheeled activities as part of their programme, although cycling has in the past been offered and there is a fleet of bikes at the school. These are reportedly in need of some maintenance to render them useable again.

Fiona Preston from Active Schools Alford reported to us that they are currently looking into the possibility of restarting the cycling programme in association with the Alford Community Sports Hub. These plans are in the early stages however and although held up by the Covid-19 pandemic, they are hoping to get a programme started in the coming academic year.

Focussing on Alford village using the same heatmap (again showing all cycling activity recorded on Strava.com) shows the routes that cyclists tend to take around and through the village. The main roads clearly seeing more cycling through traffic, but also that riders are making use of the formal and informal paths that do exist around the village.



Image 9: Heatmap produced by Strava.com

During our visits to Alford, there were a large number of young people on bikes around the village, within Haughton Park, at the recreation ground, and at the Community Campus. Bikes are clearly used a lot by the young people of Alford, as a means of transport as well as an activity in itself.

4. Policy Context

It is very likely that some or all of the bodies to be approached for support for developing facilities for cycling and wheeled sports in Haughton Park will want to see evidence that the business case for such development is 'joined up' with public policy in terms of sport and recreation, public health, planning, and to a lesser extent tourism. Accordingly, a review of all relevant policies, plans and strategies at local, regional, and national level has been conducted. A large number of documents have been consulted, with the most pertinent of them being listed below and a full list in Appendix A.

As will be demonstrated in the summary of findings below, the creation of wheeled sports facilities would be very much aligned with a wide range of local and national objectives. Such new facilities would undoubtedly make a positive contribution to wider national and local agendas in the areas of, amongst other things: health improvement, active lifestyles, improving Scotland's performance on the world stage, and tourism.

IT CONTRIBUTES TO 10 OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES



11

Image 10: Taken from the Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019-2025, this image highlights in yellow the Scottish Governments National Performance Outcomes that are relevant to this project

Sport and Recreation

A selection of national, regional and local sports and recreation strategies are relevant to this project, including:

- Active Scotland Delivery Plan (Scottish Government, 2018)
- The Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019 – 2025 (DMBinS)
- Developing a Nation of Cyclists (Scottish Cycling 2019)
- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (Aberdeenshire Council 2018 - 2028)
- NE Adventure Tourism Project (2020)
- Howe of Alford Community Action Plan 2018
- Alford Community Sports Hub, Cycling Initiative Proposal (May 2021)

"The physical environment is an important factor in encouraging and enabling us to live active lifestyles. The availability and accessibility of sport and exercise facilities, our transport infrastructure, and our built and natural environments all have a significant bearing on how readily we can take part in physical activity and sport."

Scottish Government – Active Scotland Delivery Plan

The Pump Track and associated facilities proposed for Haughton Park are not explicitly intended to provide a venue where competitive sport, or training towards competition can take place (such as a football pitch or tennis court, or even mountain bike park). Instead, the intention of this project is to provide opportunities for participation in a broader range of activities. These activities are very, but not exclusively likely, to appeal to those for whom team or competitive sport holds no interest.

Therefore, meeting the challenge of increasing participation levels in sport generally, is a target that this project is very much aligned with. From an increased base, some participants who naturally display a level of ability or talent can be identified and may in the future become interested in competing in that discipline. For example, alongside mountain biking, road, and track cycling, BMX and skateboarding are both Olympic disciplines. The top athletes at these less mainstream sports have often not followed a pathway of progression through competition at school and beyond, but rather their natural ability has been identified in a more informal way.

Thus, while the agenda of increasing participation at all locations is the main driver, and if realised, will deliver on a variety of strategic targets, the less obvious peripheral benefits to national sporting performance may also become apparent.

A great example of this is Glasgow rider Mark Ducat, who's natural talent and ability, discovered on a Pump Track, have lead him to a position as a professional rider competing on the world stage: <https://www.redbull.com/int-en/episodes/pump-for-peace-s1-e2-glasgow>

Alford Community Sports Hub have put forward a recent proposal for promoting cycling as a sport in the village. This centres around increasing participation in a number of ways, with the predicted consequence of this being a route to increasing cycle sport as a result. This is nominally based around road cycling but there is mention of the potential for involving other types of cycling too.

Public Health and Wellbeing

A selection of relevant national, regional, and local strategies:

- Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (Transport Scotland, 2017)
- Active Scotland Delivery Plan (Scottish Government, 2018)
- Healthy Eating Active Living: An Action Plan to improve diet, increase physical activity and tackle obesity (Scottish Government 2008)
- Outdoor Access Strategy (Aberdeenshire Council 2018 - 2021)
- Aberdeenshire Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2010 (Aberdeenshire Council)

Physical activity is about getting people moving. Daily walking, playing in a park, going to a gym, training with a team or aspiring to win a gold medal – it doesn't really matter how people get active, it just matters that we do.

Being physically active contributes to our personal, community and national wellbeing.

Scottish Government – Active Scotland Delivery Plan

The Scottish Government's Active Scotland Delivery Plan describes Scotland's ambitions for sport and physical activity, and measures progress being made against a range of indices. The national statistics are disaggregated to each local authority and health board area, which provides some interesting insight.

From the Plan, the findings for Aberdeenshire indicate that residents have a significantly higher-than-average frequency of active participation in sports and exercise, but a significantly lower-than-average propensity to ever participate. This suggests that in Aberdeenshire, there is more of a polarisation between those who are keen sports enthusiasts, and those who rarely if ever participate. Therefore, an aim for the area should be to supply infrastructure which is appealing and accessible to first-time and occasional users.

It has long been recognized that taking part in regular physical activity has a positive impact on the physical and mental health of individuals and society more generally. A healthier, more active nation enjoys a higher quality of life, reduces demands on health services, and creates associated economic benefits.

The facilities proposed for Haughton Park aim to be inclusive of all ages and abilities, free to use, appealing to those less interested in mainstream activities, accessible to those without a car or the ability to use one. Therefore, there are few barriers to entry as a form of physical activity – indeed it is common to see young children running around public Pump Tracks when no one else is using them, in the absence of a bike or other wheeled equipment.

In terms of the Public Health and Wellbeing agenda then, a project such as this one is lined up with many of the aims of organisational strategies at various levels.

It has also been demonstrated that cycling more generally is a sport where there is less 'drop off' in participation through later years when compared to football or other team sports. Particularly those that involve impact. Thus, there is sound logic in investing in creating a nation of cyclists from a young age, when the impact on national health in the long term is considered.

Planning

The Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 is currently in the review phase with an anticipated publishing date of 2022. However, within the proposed plan, Policy P6.1 states: *"We will support the provision of new community facilities that are required as part of a residential or other development, or as a standalone proposal, providing it is in accessible locations within settlements, is of a suitable scale, and it is available to all community residents."*

Similarly, within the Marr Area Settlement Statement, the Vision for Alford states: *"New facilities such as for recycling and additional sports and recreation facilities, are sought alongside improvements to Haughton Park."*

Tourism

Although not a project that is specifically aimed at attracting tourists to Alford, the creation of facilities will add to the overall appeal of Aberdeenshire as a destination for lovers of outdoor recreation and will support the targets of the Northeast Adventure Tourism Project (NEAT).

The NEAT project's goal is to *"secure a bigger share of the high-value UK adventure tourism market. The project will encourage more visitors to stay in the region longer because of the range and quality of adventure activities on offer."*

In specific mountain biking terms, the Scottish Government's 'Programme for Government' identifies mountain biking as one of the three most important components of outdoor tourism, alongside golf and marine tourism.

Market research commissioned by the NEAT project shows that 69% of respondents (all of whom came from elsewhere in Scotland or the north of England) are either 'extremely' or 'fairly' interested in cycling on paths and tracks, and a 46% where either 'extremely' or 'fairly' interested in Mountain Biking specifically.

The strategic approach for building the mountain bike tourism offering in Aberdeenshire is based around a cluster model, where the offering presented to the visitor by the whole region, is greater than the sum of its parts. In this way, even modest facilities like those proposed for Alford in this project, play an important part and will likely attract some tourist visitors, particularly those staying in local accommodation.

5. Site Appraisal

The proposed site is situated in the main open park area of Haughton Park adjacent to the existing play park area. The area is notable for a large open green space with well-kept short grass dotted with a mixture of small and well-established trees.



Image 11: Haughton Park Boundary and Facility Location

Access

The main carpark for Haughton Park is situated 100m from the proposed site. Pedestrians can also access through this area of the park; existing paths connect the main entrance to the park through this area. There is also a gated access from the Lang Stracht that appears to be frequently used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Parking

The existing car park is extensive with space for approximately 300 vehicles, and includes designated disabled spaces. In addition, there is further parking on the North side of the park entrance. From our observations general use of the park is well below current parking capacity.

Ground conditions

No trail pits have been carried out. There are no signs of water pooling (except during extreme weather) or significant wet areas. The proposed area for the track is set at the top of a gentle slope and will benefit from water shedding away from this area. There are several small to medium trees located with the proposed site and where possible these will need to be relocated.

Other uses

The Park contains: a toilet block with disabled access, a large area of play park facilities, and picnic benches, all are situated close to the car park. Within the zone of the proposed development are football goals and an unmarked pitch. Initial discussions have taken place with the Council officer responsible for the park (Ailsa Cunningham), who is happy for the goals and area for the pitch to be adjusted to suit the development.

Of note: The Community Campus adjacent to the school has multiple full-size football pitches.

It is also of note that a small but significant number of respondents to our Community Consultation survey highlighted the fact that Haughton Park is of high value locally as an area of open public space that is enjoyed by many. This is not to be underestimated and care should be taken to minimize the amount of open space within the park that the facilities replace.

During several visits to the site on different weekdays through the summer we noticed that the Park is often very busy, particularly over the weekends during the spells of good weather. However, it is of note that even at the busiest time witnessed, the southern end of the Park near to the Lang Stracht entrance is little used. Park users appear to prefer to stay closer to the car park and other amenities.

Construction Considerations

Access for construction vehicles can be made using the existing car park access, a compound could be formed within the car park area without significantly impacting the availability to park users. Considering the existing well-kept condition of the park, any material necessary will predominantly require to be imported. The worksite area should be fenced securely from pedestrian access. To reduce impact to the park users it would be advisable to use the access from the Lang Stracht for material deliveries. However, this access is not suitable for articulated vehicles.

Welfare During Construction

Welfare facilities should be provided taking into account the time of year works are taking place, and prevailing weather conditions. As a minimum, a site toilet should be placed in the compound with hand-washing facilities, but larger squads and / or poor weather may dictate that more extensive facilities are required.

Constraints

Power lines – SSE recommends an exclusion zone below powerlines for permitted developments. As a precaution the track layout proposed will be out-with this zone. The main restriction imposed by the power lines will be measures relating to construction plant and equipment.

There are some manhole covers indicating below ground services local to the site and contractors should satisfy themselves that no services are present within the work site.

Environmental Considerations

Desk based research shows that no environmental, geological, or scientific designations are present on the site or within the immediate area. Haughton Park however is at the eastern extent of the site designated as a historical battlefield, relating to the Battle of Alford in 1645. A map of the designated site is included as Appendix 2, and further information on this can be viewed online here:

(<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/document/600000668>)

Given this information, it would be prudent to make investigations as to whether any surveys are required prior to construction commencing. The local authority planning department should be able to advise on this.

There are several large, mature trees within the Park or immediate surroundings. These are not at risk from the proposed facility, however it would also be prudent to carry out a nesting bird survey prior to construction commencing, to be sure that no nesting birds are disrupted, particularly if the construction project is due to commence in the spring.

As mentioned above, the site appears to drain well and there are no water courses in the vicinity. Drainage from track surface should occur naturally and not affect any current drainage on site.

It is not envisaged that a ground contamination survey will be required.

Decommissioning the Facility

If at any point in the future there is a requirement to decommission the facility, this will be possible and involve essentially a reversal of the construction process. Spoil from decommissioning will require to be appropriately recycled, and the site landscaped back to its original form and re-seeded.

6. Conceptual Facility Layout

In this section, we'll describe both the types of facility that we feel will best suit the site at Haughton Park, and their layout within the park.

Pump Track

The Pump Track should be of reasonable scale in order to comfortably accommodate a number of riders at any one time. We'd recommend a track length of around 200m. Given that a priority aim of this project is to ensure that it is inclusive and attracts new and less able participants, incorporating an additional beginners' Pump Track of between 50 – 100 metres would add significant value to the facility as a whole.

The Pump Track will be an exciting, feature-rich, and progressive facility that will appeal to all wheeled sports enthusiasts. A combination of straights, curved straights, berms of differing radii, rollers and roller doubles of mixed heights will combine to ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for progression and skill development, whilst still being fun for all.

The track design includes raised rest areas where users can rest, watch, and rejoin the track at various locations. These help to manage traffic on the track, allow users to support and encourage each other, and provide social areas.

The border of the track will be landscaped such that it blends with the surrounding area, and after a short time will appear to have grown from the ground once vegetation has had a chance to regrow. It is recommended that the surrounds of the track are seeded with native wildflower species, which both enhance biodiversity in the area, and reduce the requirement for grass cutting on the landscaped banks.

It is important too that the beginner Pump Track is given due consideration and space, and rides well in its own right. Here we can learn from mistakes made at other facilities where for example, too small a track is not used as riders outgrow it too quickly, or the available space leads to corners being too tight and therefore harder to ride than the full size track.

The beginner track should be built in the same way as the main track, with the only noticeable difference being the height of the features. It should include easy roll-in and roll-out sections, connected to at least one reasonable length straight section, and idea include both left and right hand corners or be rideable in both directions.

The beginner track should also be linked to the main track, this is usually achieved with a connecting asphalt area that also serves as a rest area between rides. That way, riders on the beginner track follow the same etiquette rules and learn from the older more experienced riders. It also ensures that the progression from beginner to main track is not too daunting or difficult, and in practice, many riders will switch between the two.



Image 12: The beginner's track is adjacent to the main track on the left.

The two are separated by a raised resting area

Pump Track Location Within Haughton Park

It is vital that the location of the Pump Track within Haughton Park considers the target users' to ensure that there are as few barriers as possible to use. This facility is aimed at appealing to all wheeled sports, some of which (skateboards and scooters particularly) have very small wheels that do not roll over unsealed ground. Therefore, access to the Pump Track will need to be as close as possible to the park access.

Our suggested location for the Pump Track is shown in the aerial image below.



Image 13: Facility Location within Haughton Park

As mentioned above, this location avoids the existing facilities within the park, with the exception of one football goal, which can be moved and the informal pitch relocated. (Initial discussions with Aberdeenshire Council suggest that there will be no barrier to doing this). The suggested location also makes the most of the small amount of gradient to aid drainage, and is close to both the formal entrance at the car park, and the informal but well used entrance from the Lang Stracht.

The proposed location is importantly also out-with the exclusion zone for the powerlines that cross the site.

Pump Track Lighting

Although not mentioned in the brief for this study, we feel that it is important that the FOHP Group gives due consideration to the potential of adding floodlights to the facility, either at the time of construction, or as a future development. Clearly for much of the Aberdeenshire year, there is little light in the afternoons or evenings, when young people are not in school. So not having floodlighting of some description has the potential to greatly curtail the opportunities for use of the facility.

Lighting brings with it some unique challenges but experience from other venues shows that the outcome is positive and worth the effort and expense. This is particularly the case with new lighting technology that greatly reduces light pollution to the surrounding area, and makes the lights themselves very cheap to run.

If the FOHP Group feels that lighting the Pump Track is indeed a step too far at this stage, we would highly recommend ensuring that ducting is installed as part of the facility construction, to allow for easier installation in the future.

Associated Facilities

Part of the scope for this feasibility study was to recommend additional facilities that would complement the Pump Track at Haughton Park, as well as providing value for the local community. A few ideas have been suggested by the FOHP Group, including provision of cycle trials features, and a mountain bike skills park or area for coaching specific skills.

In this section, we analyse each of these options in more detail and provide some further recommendations for consideration. These were included in the community consultation presentation and the feedback gathered is discussed in the Project Benefits Assessment section further on in this report. It is important that any additional facilities are well thought through and will be sustainably used in the long-term.

Trials Features are a collection of objects such as boulders or trunks, but also more industrial items such as large concrete pipes or similar, placed seemingly at random. The idea behind them is to provide increasingly difficult challenges in cycling over them by using very high levels of bike control. Competitive cycle trials is a somewhat niche part of cycle sport, that is traditionally very popular in parts of northern England and the Scottish Highlands.

However, trials cycling has seen a resurgence in recent years with the popularity of street trials and more cross-over styles of riding, exemplified by Scottish stars such as Danny Macaskill and Duncan Shaw who perform incredible stunts on everyday objects, both in urban and natural landscapes. This is a non-competitive style of riding that has a self-progressing, mutually supportive culture more akin to that found at a skate park or Pump Track, so is a complementary activity that has a lot of crossover potential for Pump Track riders. In any case developing bike handling skills through practicing basic trials skills is very beneficial for all types of cycling.

Our recommendation is that some items be added to the fringes of the Pump Track and elsewhere, that could be used for practicing trials skills, but also serve as informal benches or social hangout areas. It is important that these are completely maintenance free so as not to overly burden the eventual facility managers. Therefore, timber features would be ill advised, but kerbs, boulders, galvanised steel or 'Plaswood' type benches or similar items would be suitable. It is important that they are of mixed dimensions and heights to allow for accessible entry to those looking to try this type of riding for the first time, whilst keeping things interesting as skills develop.

By including features in this way rather than as a more formal trials area, it is easy to envisage that a rider might have a break from riding the Pump Track and try some trials at the side.

Skills Areas are usually a small self-contained set of individual features that are arranged in a way that allows for easy repeat practice of any particular feature.

Skills areas are normally built as part of a larger bike park, or gateway to wild trail network, or at a school where a mountain bike club is based. In these locations they are used as coaching venues where specific techniques can be worked on in either formally or informally, as part of a longer ride on associated trails. This is what gives purpose to the facility.

In order to incorporate progression that keeps riders coming back to a skills area without associated trail network, the facility itself needs to be of a fairly substantial size, becoming a mini bike park and a destination in its own right.

At Haughton Park, there is insufficient space or elevation change for a skills area of this scale. It is therefore hard to envisage that a focussed skills area would be a good fit, especially as this study has not discovered evidence of demand for such a facility. Our fear is that a small skills area would be little used as a facility on its own, and would not deliver sustainable return on the investment required.

A concept that we would recommend instead is an **All-Ability Trail**. This would be something of a hybrid facility with the intention of providing a more inclusive gateway into participation in mountain biking at all levels and for users of all types of bike. It would, however, also encourage other activity such as walking or running by providing an all-weather surfaced path within the Park, and be sensory in nature, thus being both accessible and enjoyable for those with limited physical ability and/or sensory impairment.

In 2016 we designed and built Scotland's first All-Ability Mountain Bike Trail in Fife and this All-Ability Trail builds on that concept. The All-Ability Trail at Haughton Park would be 2 metres wide and 270m long. It would include long, low changes in gradient and wide, very gently banked corners suitable for 3 and 4 wheel All-Ability bikes, as well as pushchairs etc. These add some interest to a level path, but wouldn't be a barrier to use by being intimidating or difficult to walk on.

Sensory features can include changes in surface such as cobbles, more pronounced rollers, and could include other sensory installations such as musical or texture based activities in the future. These would be installed in 'bus stops' or lay-bys at the side of the main path so as to be optional.

By adding a progressive set of mountain bike specific features in a similar way, the All-Ability Trail could be used for more formal coaching sessions too. Each section or individual skill could be focussed on individually and easily repeated, or sections could be linked together with the All-Ability Trail to form a 'skills trail'.

The final complementary facility that we'd recommend is a **surfaced gathering area**, with a **simple shelter** at the side. This would serve multiple purposes as an area to meet and run formal sessions from, as well as a more informal bag drop or shelter from the rain when using the Pump Track or All-Ability Trail.

Facility Maintenance

Regular maintenance is an essential component of managing facilities such as those proposed for Houghton Park and the FOHP group should consider both the practicalities and costs of ensuring that this happens in a sustainable manner.

Given that the FOHP Group have other responsibilities beyond just these facilities, it is recommended that a sub-group is formed to take on responsibility for maintenance related activities.

The key to good maintenance is a 'little and often' approach, where regular checks identify potential problems early. This allows for them to be dealt with before becoming a hazard to riders and inevitably incurring more cost. Maintenance is a good project for local young people to get involved in as it encourages ownership and responsible use of the facility – particularly those who are actively using it. Some young people's volunteering initiatives such as the Scouts and Duke of Edinburgh awards can also provide mutually beneficial arrangements.

It is recommended that regular maintenance checks are carried out during the first year of use, as this is when the facilities will both be used the most, and not yet be fully settled, or bedded in. Therefore, regular preventative maintenance at this stage will pay dividends in the future, and will also give those responsible for facility maintenance a real-time indication of the likely future maintenance burden.

A simple maintenance schedule and logging document is recommended for use by FOHP Group. Collective Trax & CRC provide templates of both of these documents with every facility we build.

The design and construction of the facilities will in themselves minimise the maintenance requirement as much as possible. The asphalt surface of the Pump Track will require little to no maintenance aside from ensuring that organic material does not build up on the surface. Vegetation at the sides of the track surface should be strimmed back occasionally to prevent overgrowth, and the drainage must also be kept clear.

The All-Ability Trail will need similar maintenance, with the addition of regular checks to ensure that the surface is not becoming rutted or potholed at all. This will be especially important during the first few months of use, while the trail is still bedding in. Any issues can be easily rectified, and doing so will ensure that the trail stays in good condition for many years.

In terms of cost, it is suggested that as a minimum for mountain bike trails and paths, 5% of the total build cost is budgeted for maintenance annually over the first 5 years for a project of this size. However, given that the Pump Track will need very little maintenance we feel confident that a figure of 2.5% rather than 5% will ensure a reasonable budget figure is generated for the whole facility.

7. Project Benefits Assessment

Community Consultation

The community consultation exercise carried out during the months of June and July 2020 proved to be very successful, notwithstanding the challenges presented by the ongoing Covid pandemic and associated difficulties with carrying out face to face consultations.

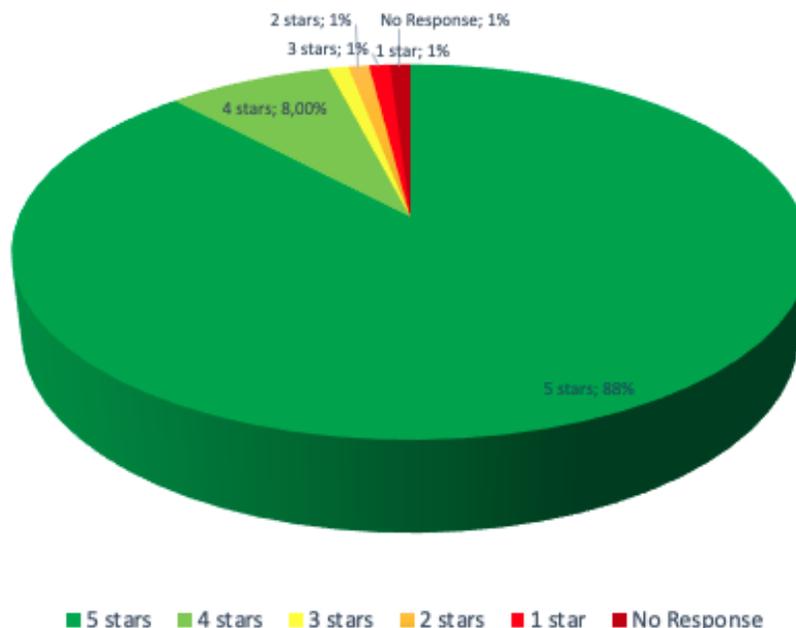
In total, 189 people responded to the survey, with 100% of those doing so online. This is a significant response, especially considering the local nature of the project overall, and we commend the FOHP group's work in promoting the opportunity to provide opinions and feedback around the local community. Some headline findings from the survey are below with further analysis following. The full survey responses are included as an additional file with this feasibility study (*Friends of Haughton Park - Community Consultation 2021*).

Please note these do not follow the order in which the questions were asked in the consultation survey):

- 116 respondents of the 189 total (61%) listed their postcode as within the AB33 area. This covers Alford, Muir of Fowlis, and Towie. Every other respondent was from within Aberdeenshire.
- 9 respondents selected that they were 'Under 18 years of age', while 10 were 'Over 65 years of age'. The remaining 170 were '18 – 65 years of age'.

Question 2 asked, 'From what you know of the proposed facilities for Haughton Park, what is your reaction to the idea?' and asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1-5, where 1 was 'very negative' and 5 'very positive'.

From what you know about the proposed facilities for Haughton Park, what is your reaction to the idea?



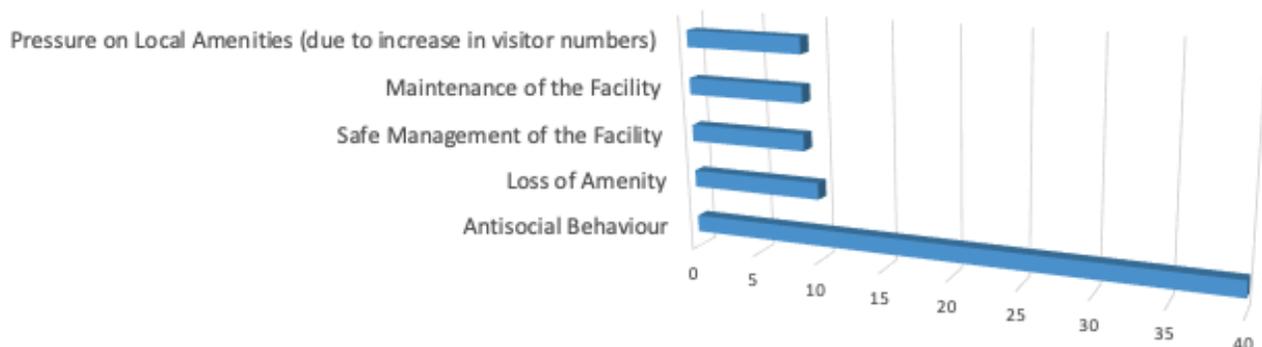
The feedback therefore is overwhelmingly positive in support of the project. It is worth bearing in mind, that respondents are more likely to engage with a consultation if it will have a direct impact on them personally, either positively or negatively. Also, that people who already actively participate in cycling, or have family who do, are more likely to engage with a cycling related project consultation. Thus, there is a risk of confirmation bias when reading these results, and care must be taken to give due acknowledgment of any concerns respondents may have, and we have listed these first.

- Of the 8 respondents who rated '3' or less in Question 2 above, 4 respondents also noted that the facilities would likely bring benefits to the area or to them personally, but had other over-riding concerns.
 - The concerns of these specific respondents were split between the possibility of an increase in different types of anti-social behaviour, and the loss of open, green space.

Question 4 asked, 'What downsides (if any) do you think there might be?'

- Approximately 40 respondents listed the potential for some form of antisocial behaviour, or an increase in antisocial behaviour as a concern.
 - Of these only 6 were out-with AB33, so this is clearly a concern for the local population.
- 10 respondents listed a loss of amenity, relating to the loss of open green space, loss of the football goals, or restriction to pedestrian access to the park as a concern.
- A small number <10 respondents mentioned concerns relating to the management of the facility. These include safety concerns, ensuring young riders weren't intimidated by older riders, and conversely that young riders might get in the way of older riders.
- A small number <10 respondents mentioned concerns relating to the maintenance of the facility.
- A small number <10 respondents mentioned concerns with an increase in visitors relating to pressure on local amenities such as car parking and toilets etc.

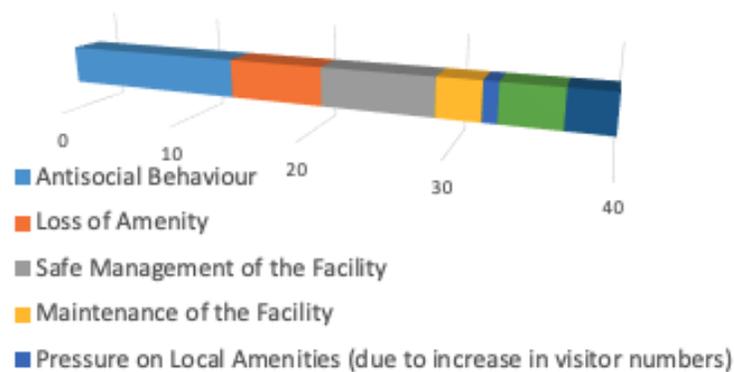
What downsides (if any) do you think there might be?



Similarly, to highlight any specific concerns and allow the FOHP Group to address them at the earliest opportunity, Question 5 asked, 'Do you have any specific concerns you would like us to know about? (The more detail you can provide, the better)'.

For ease we have grouped the specific concerns into themes as above. The complete survey responses are included as an associated file with this study and should be consulted to gain insight into the nature of the concerns that respondents have. This will allow the FOHP Group to proactively respond to these in future communications. (It is worth noting that almost all of those describing a concern also were very positive in their response to Question 3 relating to benefits)

Do you have any specific concerns you would like us to know about?



It is clear from the responses to both Questions 4 & 5 that the theme of anti-social behaviour is a big concern, particularly to the local population, as would be expected. Similarly, littering and graffiti are common concerns. Local residents obviously hold the Park in high regard and are worried that the development will be detrimental – in both these anti-social aspects, and in terms of a loss of open park space which they see as a valuable resource.

What is not clear is whether any development, for example extending the playpark, or building a tennis court, would raise the same concerns, or whether it is particularly the nature of the facilities being proposed that people are uncomfortable with.

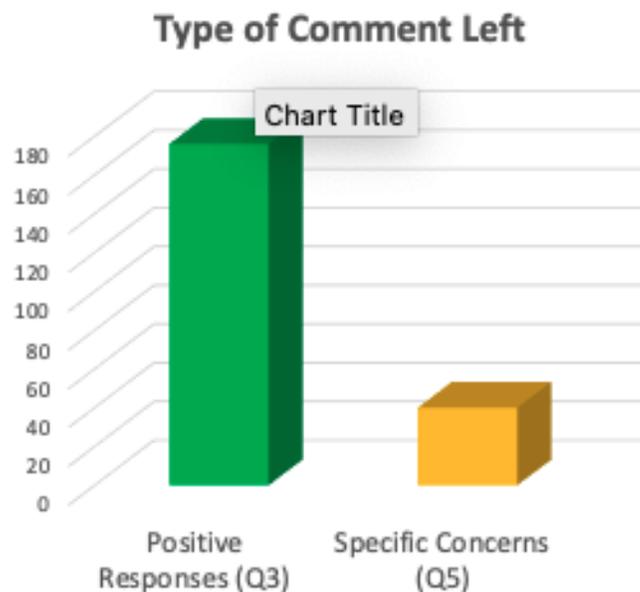
This is further reinforced by several responses indicating concerns over the safety, management, and social aspect of the proposed pump track. This is understandable and a common issue with Pump Track developments, particularly in this case as there is no other similar facility in the region to use as an example. People are naturally nervous of what they have no experience of.

Question 3 asked, 'What benefits to the local area, or to you personally, do you think the Pump Track and All Ability Trail might bring?' Responses were numerous, enthusiastic, and generally expansive. Only 13 of 189 respondents declined to comment or responded 'no benefit' to this question.

Responses can be broadly grouped into the following themes:

- Health and wellbeing, outdoor activity (especially mentioning young people), social meeting point,
- Increased amenity in the village, free to use, attracting visitors and increasing quality of life
- Increased footfall and expenditure in local shops and cafes, increased visitors to the caravan park
- Cycling skills development, safe space to ride bikes
- All-Ability facility for young and less able people
- Less need to travel to access facilities at Tarland or Inverness

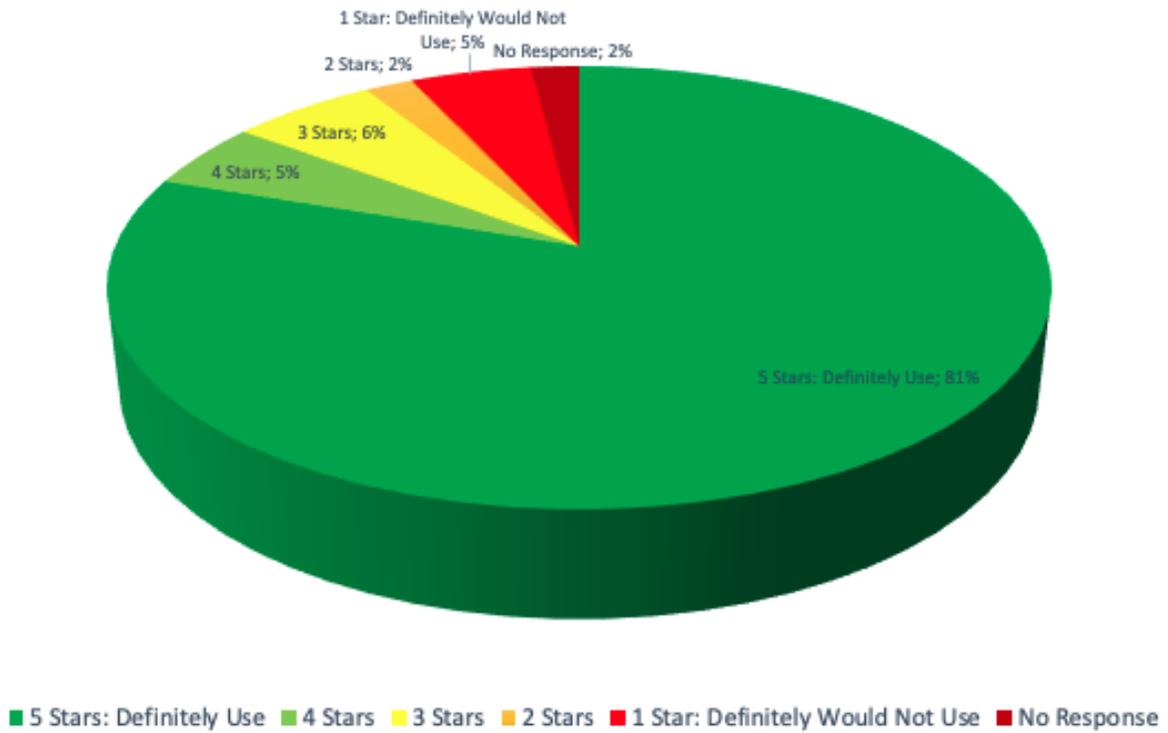
As mentioned above, these responses make very encouraging reading and certainly help to validate the project, whilst taking people's concerns into account.



Later questions in the survey concerned the likely usage of the facility, and help to provide an indication of what that might be.

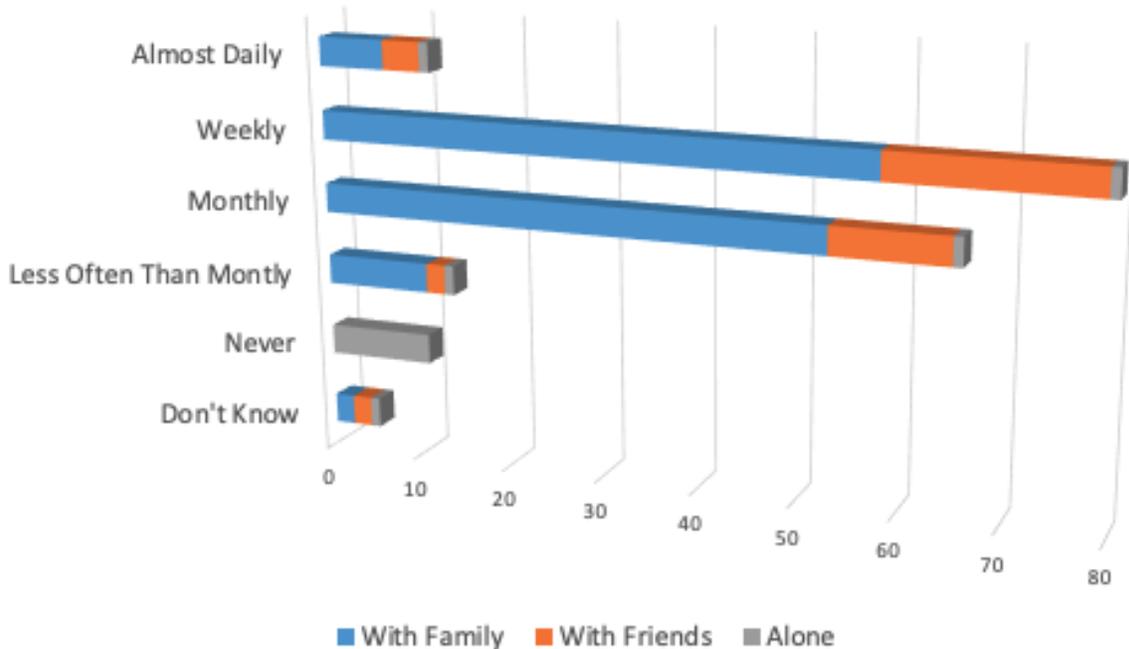
Question 6, asked respondents to again rate on a scale of 1-5 the following question: 'Do you think you and/or members of your household would use the Pump Track and/or All-Ability Trail at Haughton Park?'

Do you think you and/or members of your household would use the Pump Track and/or All-Ability Trail at Haughton Park?



Question 8 then asked about frequency of use, asking respondents to choose from the following options in response to the question, 'How often do you think you might use either of the proposed facilities?': Almost Daily (i.e. 3+ times per week), Weekly (i.e. 1-2 times per week), Monthly (i.e. 1-2 times per month), Less often than monthly, Never, Don't know.

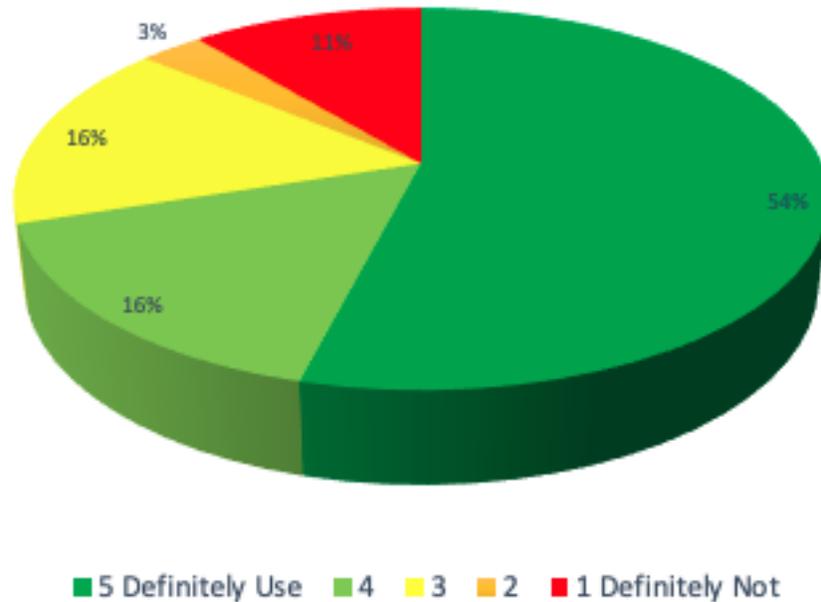
How often do you think you might use either of the proposed facilities?



- It is worth noting that of the 18 respondents who answered 'Less Often Than Monthly' or 'Don't Know', 8 left very positive responses to Question 3 regarding benefits, and 9 left further positive and encouraging comments in the final question inviting further comment. Although a small number of respondents in this section, it does indicate support from within the community even from those who are not very likely to ever use the facility.
- Of those responding 'Monthly' or less frequently, 45 live out-with the AB33 postcode, but are very positive about the project (Question 2) and report that they would use the facility (Question 6). This shows that as would be expected, having to travel to use the facility is a barrier to regular use. On the other hand, it also shows that the facility will attract people from outside Alford itself into the village on a fairly regular basis.
- 11 respondents answered 'Never' to Question 8. They similarly reported that they nor members of their family would use the facility
 - However, 5 of these respondents were positive overall in their view of the facility in question 2, and 3 of these left specifically positive comments, again reinforcing the idea of support from those who may never actually use either facility.

Finally, Question 7 asked, 'Do you feel that the proposed facilities would encourage you to ride a bike more than you do at present?' And asked respondents to again choose a rating between '1 - Definitely not' and '5 - Definitely'.

Do you feel that the proposed facilities would encourage you to ride a bike more than you do at present?



- Of the 31 respondents who rated '2' or '1', 7 respondents also reported that they or members of their family would definitely use the facility, suggesting that they are already active cyclists, and this is not necessarily a negative response.
- Relating to age group, in the Under 18 years of age category, 9 of 11 respondents rated either '4' or '5', with the remaining 2 rating '3' and of these, 1 reports that they'd ride the facility daily – suggesting that they are already a very keen cyclist.

It is clear from these responses and the written comments to many questions that creating specific facilities for cycling, in an easy to access and safe, traffic free environment, will help to encourage more people from the village and surrounding area to cycle more regularly.

Concerns around anti-social behaviour, and safety are legitimate concerns, particularly where there is no prior experience of similar facilities. There is much evidence available from other facilities across the UK that shows that Pump Tracks are actually very effective at reducing instances of anti-social behaviour in all sorts of settings. Two examples of this were included in the community consultation presentation we'd recommend that these and other case studies are used in future communications as well.

Local and Regional Fit

It is important that any facility is developed with a holistic view in mind regarding the other amenities in the immediate locality and the greater area. This project is a modest scale and therefore the local area is the most important consideration, although as the community consultation has shown, and as we know from other similar projects, people will travel to use such a facility. This is especially the case with this project as it will likely be the first of its kind to be built in the northeast of Scotland.

At a local level, the village of Alford has many positive attributes such as the Community Campus with its sports pitches, climbing wall and swimming pool, the Skate Park, Bowling Green, Tennis courts and Ski Slope, The Golf Club, The Transport Museum, and of course Haughton Country Park itself. There are also 2 play parks, and the Holiday Park which has recently been taken on by new management.

As noted earlier in this report, a large number of people on bikes of all ages were observed during our visits to Alford and creating a purpose built facility for developing skills and simply enjoying cycling away from traffic appears to be a very positive step. The project will certainly help deliver the relevant aims of the Community Action Plan for Alford.

At a regional level, the project delivers on many of the aims of various regional and national bodies mentioned above. It will provide more opportunity for healthy exercise outdoors, help to create a culture of cycling in the village, and help towards the creation of a regional network of high quality cycling facilities. As the project scale is appropriate relative to the size of the population, it will work in tandem with other facilities that are planned for surrounding towns in the region rather than being in competition with them. Although it is worth noting that the number of users travelling into Alford to use the facility may decrease in the future as others open.

Community Integration

There is obvious support from within the community for this project as well as from local cycle coaching organisations such as Ride in Peace Adventures and Deeside Thistle Cycling Club. (Letters of support are included in Appendix C)

While such enthusiasm is fantastic to see, it does appear from an objective viewpoint that cycling related activity in the village is a little disjointed and without focus. Therefore, it is our strong recommendation that some formalised cycling activity is developed in tandem with this facility based project. Although this is peripheral to the aims of the FOHP Group, and indeed is out-with the scope of this feasibility study, we see it as essential to the sustained success of the facilities being proposed.

The first step towards this could be to build on discussions with Alford CC representatives around formalising the club and building a youth section with organised weekly activity. (Scottish Cycling's Regional Development Officer can help with this, and Aberdeenshire Sports Council provide club development grants). A formalised club would also provide a more tangible route towards engaging young people in the maintenance of the facility, thus providing

a sense of ownership. It can also help to generate a positive culture of intergenerational peer support at a facility like a Pump Track and helping to avoid the anti-social behaviours that are a serious concern of many local residents.

To be truly inclusive, a facility such as the Pump Track and All-Ability Trail proposed here, should also provide a means through which people who don't own a bike are able to ride, or learn to ride. In order to do this, a simple steel container in the car park or next to the track can be used to store a fleet of mountain bikes and helmets for use during organised sessions. Having a formalised club would again provide a conduit for raising money towards this and managing the use and maintenance of the bikes.

It may be that in reality, the creation of a club can happen more quickly than raising sufficient funds to construct these facilities. In that case, collaboration with the Community Campus, or Transport Museum could provide a temporary base from which formal sessions could take place.

A further recommendation is that the Group build on relationships already made within the Alford Community Sports Hub and other local community groups, with the aim of supporting and promoting initiatives to improve active travel and safe cycling infrastructure around the village in any way they can. This is again out-with the aims of the FOHP Group, but will help to deliver peripheral benefits by generating and growing the culture of cycling in the village. This will help to boost user numbers through both an increase in participation, and ease of access for young people if safe, traffic free routes around the village can be created. As mentioned above, engaging the Community Campus and Transport Museum, and other relevant organisations such as the Community Council and the local Community Police, to collaborate on a holistic approach to becoming a cycle-friendly village would be a very positive initiative, and one that is mentioned as a specific aim in the Community Action Plan. (Sustrans may be able to help with this)

There are several comments in the Community Consultation survey that relate to the All-Ability Trail being a very welcome addition for allowing both young children to ride in safety, and less able people to enjoy the park. The FOHP Group have intimated that they are considering a phased approach to constructing the entire facility, and this may be dependent on the ability to raise sufficient funds. If this is the case and a phase approach is followed, it will be important that communication is maintained with the local community to ensure that they do not feel let down or misled, and that they understand the approach being taken and reasons for it.

Similarly, there are clearly several respondents to the survey who have misunderstood the intention to relocate the football goals in the park and are worried about the loss of that amenity. Clear communication via social media, the Alfordcommunity.co.uk website, in print via posters or leaflets, and in person can again help to assuage these concerns.

User Numbers

Estimating user numbers for a proposed facility is a very difficult thing to do as it depends on multiple variables. However, by combining the information that we have researched from various regional and national reports, with the results of our Community Consultation survey, and experience from other facilities, we can make some general estimations.

Primarily this facility is aimed at, and of a scale to attract, local people from within the village of Alford and immediate surrounding area. These users will make up the majority of visits to the facility, particularly as a large proportion are likely to be young people who will simply cycle there.

From the survey, of the 126 respondents who live in the AB33 area, 66 respondents said that they'd use the facility 'Almost daily (i.e. 3 or more times per week)' or 'Weekly (i.e. once or twice a week)', and a further 28 'Monthly (i.e. once or twice a month)'. Of that total 94 respondents, 91 reported that they'd with other friends or family members. This data alone, although by no means guaranteed, suggests that the facility will be in almost constant use, especially through the summer months.

From the Cycling Scotland Annual Cycling Monitoring Report 2020, we know that 50% of residents in Aberdeenshire have access to at least one bike for private use. Alford has a population of approximately 2,500, meaning that there are an estimated 1,250 people in the village with access to a bike. From the same report, '10.3% of people in small remote towns have cycled for pleasure/fitness in the previous 7 days' giving approximately 257 bike rides per week in Alford.

This of course is overly simplistic for our analysis as it does not take into account the type of bike, or suitability for use off road (for example we know that road cycling is very popular in Aberdeenshire, so a large proportion of bikes will be unsuitable for a Pump Track). It also does not take into account that many residents may ride several times per week, so the frequency of actual rides in Alford may be much higher. This data does however give some background to our observations that there were a lot of bikes in use in Alford village during our visits, and that cycling is thriving in the area despite the current lack of purpose built facilities or travel routes.

At a regional level, as mentioned above in the section 'Local, Regional and National Context', a 35 minute drive time to reach Alford would be a reasonable starting point for analysis, and covers the localities of: Inverurie, Kintore, Westhill, Banchory, Aboyne, and Huntly. Combined, these have a population of almost 46,000 people, and using the same breakdown as above indicates that some 23,000 people have access to a bike, and over 4,600 rides 'for pleasure/fitness' happen weekly. (Again, acknowledging the potential pitfalls of this analysis).

Using our Community Consultation survey results to cross check this information, of the 73 respondents who live out-with the AB33 postcode area, 24 respondents said that they'd use the facility 'Almost daily (i.e. 3 or more times per week)' or 'Weekly (i.e. once or twice a week)', and a further 37 'Monthly (i.e. once or twice a month)'. All respondents from these postcode areas reported that they'd visit the facility with other friends or family members.

So while giving estimated visitor numbers is very difficult, the overall picture is very positive, and it is safe to say that the facility should attract daily use by multiple people from both within Alford and visiting from elsewhere. Whilst the Community Consultation did reach a lot of people, the cycling community in Aberdeenshire is very large as reported above, and we can reasonably assume that the findings of the survey can be extrapolated upwards.

User Number Considerations

As mentioned, many variables can affect user numbers and these are worth bearing in mind, thus we've listed some below.

- The weather – a long dry summer as has occurred in 2021 will naturally lead to an increase in cycling activity, while the opposite is also true.
- Growth in bike ownership and cycling activity during the Covid Pandemic. The data that Cycling Scotland's Cycling Monitoring Report 2020 has used is taken from the Scottish Household Survey in 2018. This is the most recent data available, but we know that there has been a boom in both bike sales and cycling activity since early 2020 when the Covid Pandemic struck. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the estimates above are conservative in terms of access to bikes and participation numbers.
- Novelty factor. As discussed in the Local, Regional and National Context section, this facility is likely to be the first of its kind in Aberdeenshire, indeed in the northeast of Scotland. Experience from the Pump Track at Inverness (although a much larger scale) shows that people are willing to travel a large distance to visit facilities like this. It is reasonable therefore, to anticipate a 'rush' in visitors during the first summer of opening as people come to try out the new facility.
- Similarly, user numbers will be higher during the summer season, due to both the weather, available daylight, and school holidays.

These variables are all independent of our recommendations for ensuring that the facility usage numbers are sustained. The first year of any facility is always busy due to the 'novelty factor' mentioned above, and the challenge for the FOHP Group is to ensure that these user numbers are sustained for the long term. To emphasize this point, we've summarized our recommendations below:

- Regular use of the facility in the long term will depend on ease of safe (traffic free ideally) access for young people from within the village.
- Creation of a cycling club that provides formal, organised and regular cycling activity will deliver numerous long term benefits.
- Floodlighting will greatly extend the season in which the facility can be used, and mean that the only barriers to use will be bad weather, or lying snow or ice.

8. Estimated Project Costs

The estimated project costs for each section of the project are set out in the table below. Please note that this cost estimate includes items that are peripheral to the main facilities themselves, but are nevertheless an important part of the facility infrastructure or sustainment. It may be however, that these can be removed from the total if they can be sourced from elsewhere as a donation to the project, (for example, the Shelter). This is discussed further in the section below.

Alford Pump Track and All-Abilities Trail Project – Budget Cost Estimates			
Item	Description		Total (net VAT)
1	Pump Track		£125,000.00
2	All-Ability Trail		£22,000.00
3	Trails Features (Rock features, seating benches and logs)		£12,000.00
4	Shelter (Provisional budget)		£14,000.00
5	Signage (Design and installation)		£3,000.00
6	Planning (Including environmental reports as required)		£6,000.00
7	Maintenance (2.5% of overall facility construction cost per year for 5 years)		£19,000.00
8	Decommissioning – (cost to remove facility in the future)		£23,500.00
		Sub Total	£224,500.00
		VAT	£44,900.00
		Total	£269,400.00

Potential Funding Sources

The FOHP Group have made a positive start to their fundraising efforts and the funding strategy that we were supplied with has a good range of opportunities from a variety of sources. In addition to those already listed, we have suggested some further opportunities to explore at the bottom of the document. Much of the information within the www.funding.scot site is only available to SCVO members, so unfortunately our ability to research each fund thoroughly is limited. However, we recommend regularly checking the www.funding.scot website for the latest information as matter of course.

Maximising Grant Aid

The key to successfully reaching a funding target is careful assessment of each funding source and understanding exactly what criteria they have, what they will fund, and when. Balancing this against the project milestones and ensuring that grant aid is used in the most efficient way possible can be a challenging endeavour.

As the FOHP Group are already doing, seeking fundraising opportunities from across a wide spectrum of providers and local initiatives. As well as raising cash, another angle to consider is to approach local companies and organisations who may be able to support the project with 'benefit in kind' donations. These might be donations of materials, skills, or simply time. Anything that could be considered a professional service that would otherwise be paid for should be logged as a donation in kind, as some funders will accept this as a cash equivalent where match funding is required.

The sportscotland Cycling Facilities Fund is the largest likely funding provider and will only provide funding that is matched by other sources. Our understanding is that this 'match' funding is based on 'eligible project costs' and cannot include benefit in kind donations unfortunately. Therefore, as mentioned in the above, if benefit in kind donations are offered, it would make most sense to remove these from the budget total in order to reduce the overall funding target, or if possible ask the donors to donate the cash equivalent in order that the donation can effectively be doubled.

We'd recommend double checking with each funder prior to accepting any donations in order to ensure that adherence to their individual guidelines is followed at each stage.

Phasing the Project

The FOHP Group have intimated that they would like to consider phasing the project construction as this may be more manageable in terms of fundraising. Whilst there is obvious logic behind this strategy, our advice based on experience of many other similar projects is not to phase it, and deliver the whole facility in one go.

Looking at the breakdown of costs, the All-Ability Trail is just over 8% of the total cost of the project, and a proportion of the All-Ability Trail cost is for the access paths that will have to be created in any case.

This relatively small cost would become considerably larger if constructed separately due to the necessity to carry out all preliminary works, mobilisation and demobilisation, all H&S and compound structures etc for both projects. The All-Ability Trail is considerably cheaper to construct when included as part of a bigger project due to the economies of scale that can be realised.

A further reason for constructing the entire facility at once is that doing so will provide a more tangibly inclusive facility. This will be a benefit for the local community, and help with fundraising generally.

9. Concluding Remarks

Collective Trax and CRContracting would like to thank the Friends of Houghton Park Group for commissioning us to carry out this feasibility study. It has been an interesting and satisfying piece of work, and we are grateful for the support that the group has provided throughout.

It is clear that the proposed Pump Track, along with the other additional facilities suggested (All-Ability Trail and Trials Features) will help to deliver on the various aims of local, regional, and national policy agendas, and above all will be a positive development for the community of Alford and the surrounding area in a variety of ways.

It should not be forgotten though that there will be some people who are opposed to the proposals, as has been shown through the Community Consultation process, and continued communication at all levels will be important as the project progresses.

To this end, we will retain the presence online of the presentation used in the Community Consultation, and will happily update it with new information and updates as these become available. We hope that this will provide a useful resource for the FOHP Group in their communication efforts.

We are aware that this report is just one major milestone in this project, and that there is much work to follow, not least with fund raising. We hope though that having the completed report will help to unlock much of that, and provide some helpful advice as to next steps.

Finally, we'd like to thank all those who have helped us to research and produce this report. All organisations referenced have been listed in the appendix, and individuals quoted where appropriate.

Appendix A: Policies, Strategies Etc Referred to in This Report

National

Active Scotland Delivery Plan (Scottish Government 2018)

Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (Transport Scotland, 2017)

The Sustainable Development of Mountain Biking in Scotland - National Strategic Framework 2016-18 Refresh (Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, 2016)

Guide to Project Development for Mountain Bike Trails (sportscotland et al, 2015)

Mountain Biking Tourism in Scotland (Scottish Enterprise, 2013)

National Performance Outcomes (Scottish Government, 2016)

'Reaching Higher: Building on the Success of Sport 21' (Scottish Government, 2007)

'Rides of Way' – Cycling UK's Off-Road Report 2017

Scottish Cycling Strategy 2014-19 (Cycling Scotland, 2013)

Scottish Tourism 2020 – National Tourism Strategy

Tourism Development Framework for Scotland (VisitScotland, 2013)

UK Mountain Biking Tourism Characteristics (M.S.Gajda, 2009)

Value of Cycle Tourism (Transform Scotland, 2013)

Annual Cycling Monitoring Report (Cycling Scotland 2020)

Regional/Local

Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2013-17

Aberdeenshire Council Walking and Cycling Plan (2009)

Aberdeen City & Shire Tourism Partnership Strategy 2013-20

Garioch Community Plan, 2016-19

Kincardine and Mearns Community Plan, 2016-19

Making Aberdeenshire More Active (Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership, 2015)

Marr Community Plan, 2019-22

South Aberdeenshire Local Development Strategy

Strategy for an Active Aberdeen 2016-20 (Active Aberdeen Partnership, 2016)

Visit Aberdeenshire Destination Narrative, 2017

Appendix B: Designated Site of the Battle of Alford

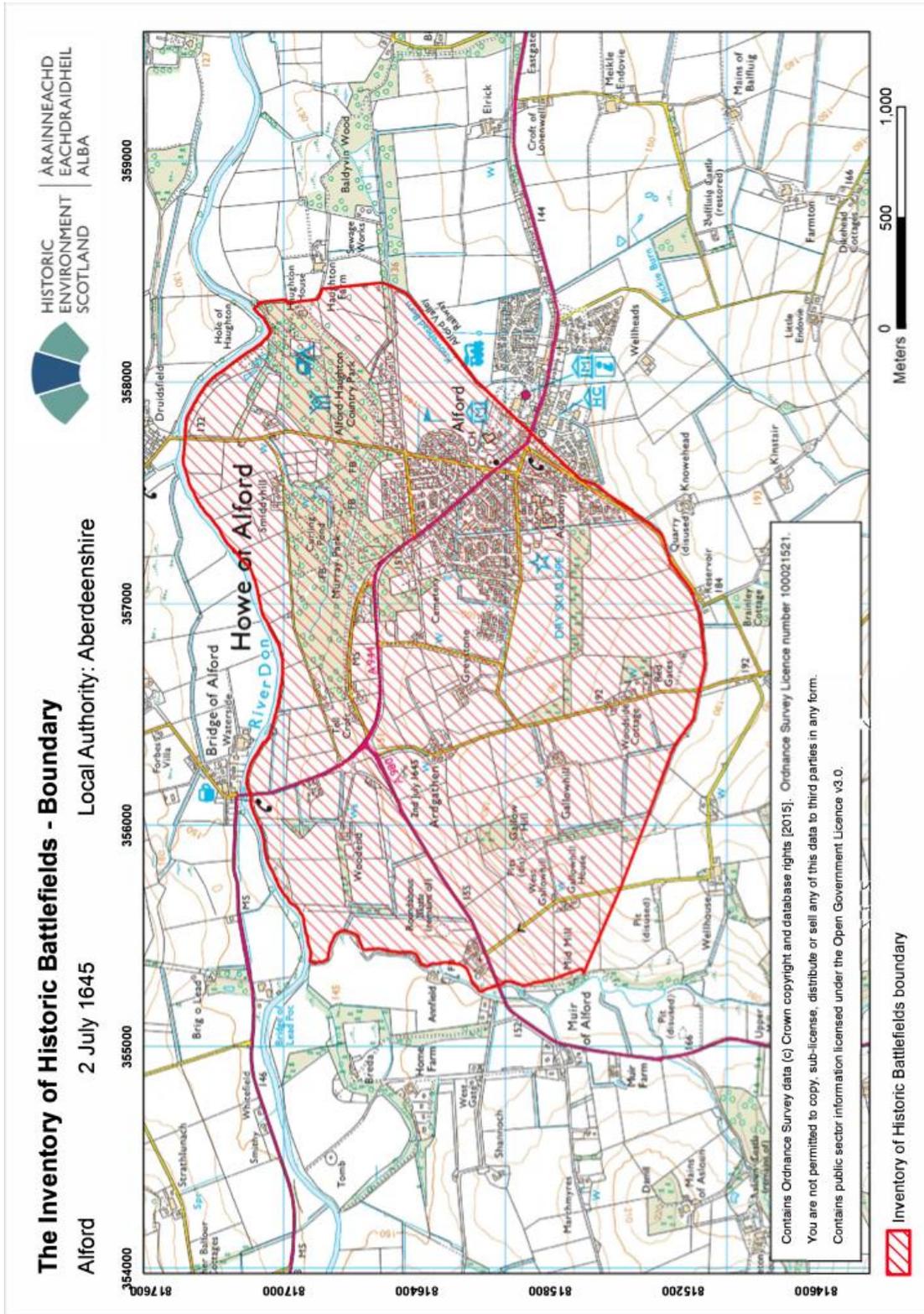


Image 14: Map Courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland

Appendix C: Letters of Support

Gordon Watt – Deeside Thistle MTB Guide/Coach

"I filled in the questionnaire a week or so ago - I mentioned that we might use it for some coaching with our MTB group, but probably not extensively. We don't often use Tarland or Aboyne because most of our volunteers have MBL qualifications rather than Coaches so we tend to mainly go on trail rides rather than hit up the "park and play" stuff. Our riders are also older (S1-5) so it's hard to run a whole session at a pump track. Last group I took out did Crack Cleaner and Corona Time! ...

I do, however, run some Girls Go MTB sessions through the club, which would definitely use a pump track type facility. They'd be a much better fit I think - most of them are keen roadies/CX riders who would like to do more MTB but there's not enough MTB coaches and guides to take them on a normal Saturday session. We meet 3-4 times a year at present, but a base like Alford (there are some fun wee XC trails in the woods) would work well."

Ride In Peace Adventures

Mountain Biking Sporting Impact Assessment

Ride In Peace Adventures (RIPA) started in the Summer for 2017 to provide mountain bike coaching and guiding in Aberdeenshire. A key objective is to develop an opportunity for local school kids to ride, starting with school holiday camps and after school taster sessions in collaboration with Active Schools coordinators in Aboyne. One of the main reasons we were able to start camps and after school programs was use of the nearby facilities of Aboyne Bike Park and Tarland Trails over other areas within Aberdeenshire.

Through this collaboration RIPA has the chance to promote sessions to appropriate school networks and channels within them, principally to kids that are participating in Bike Ability with the aim of progressing into mountain biking with the GO MTB Award. Links with Active Schools also provide an opportunity to help some Academy kids come out of class to gain skills experience. With increase in demand RIPA now has an additional female coach for 2021 and has increased the number of taster sessions and introduced new girls only sessions.

To be able to develop RIPA and Active School connection by additional school networks such as Alford. For RIPA to be able to take school groups out riding there needs to be a safe purposely made mountain bike track. To develop the site at Houghton Park for cycling, mountain biking, bmx and other activities (skateboarding, scooters, wheelchair use etc) would be the ideal.

Houghton Park will be a fantastic skills training area in the local park with progressive features from rollers to jumps. The design has a short track with rock gardens that will be perfect to introduce beginners and intermediates to trail features. Having a small and compact site allows the opportunity for multiple laps, which is ideal for progressing control and confidence.

Days at the Houghton Park include families with small first time pedal bikes, lots of local younger kids with parents, and local youths.

Having a stand alone pump track would support the increased demand in participation the area is seeing. Pump tracks are one of the best terrains for coaching and developing skills. This will allow RIPA to hold more taster and skill specific sessions, in turn increasing participation.

RIPA has been providing after school taster sessions for kids aged 7-16 for the past 3 years. The RIPA prefers using safe purposely made cycling and mountain bike facilities in local communities for coaching. Overall, the creation of a Pump Track and bike track at Houghton park will be a fantastic opportunity for skills area and sorely needed in the region for safe, progressive, purposely made mountain bike features and terrain facilities for coaching on.

Christopher Roper

Alford Community Sport Hub

To Whom It May Concern

Alford Community Sport Hub has launched an initiative to promote cycling given the huge growth in interest over the last few years. We are working with local road riding and mountain biking clubs and Active Schools to encourage newcomers to take part in group rides, learn how to look after their bikes and follow simple safety procedures. We have drafted basic guidance for novice riders and are putting together workshops on bike maintenance. As well as liaising with clubs and other interested parties in Alford we are working closely with Aberdeenshire Council.

The main gap in current provision is the lack of a suitable facility for BMX riders and for children wishing to learn bike handling skills. The Friends of Houghton Park presented their proposals for a pump track to us and we had a site meeting recently with them to examine their plans. We believe that what they propose would be a terrific addition to the facilities available for local people and day trippers to Houghton Country Park in Alford. It would meet a significant gap in the growing demand for facilities from cyclists.

The Friends of Houghton Park have given us assurances about the ability to meet modest running costs but we understand that capital needs to be found to build the facility. We are happy, therefore, to support the Friends' application to SportScotland for a grant.

Rodney Stone
Chair, Alford Community Sport Hub



Alford Valley Community Railway

Alford Valley Community Railway (AVCR) fully supports the plans of Friends of Houghton Park to build the Houghton Park Pump Track and All Ability Trail.

The Pump Track will be the only one of its kind in our area and therefore will be a major draw to the village. The Track will give riders of varying abilities the opportunity to develop and master skills of different styles of cycling. It will also give them confidence and a great sense of achievement.

The Pump Track and Trail will be a welcome asset to Alford. It benefit our community by encouraging locals and visitors alike to visit Alford for the day to use this fantastic facility as well as other attractions, like our Railway and Houghton Park. Coffee shops, shops etc will also benefit economically from an increased footfall to our village.

In conclusion, The Houghton Park Pump Track and All Ability Trail will be a welcome asset to our area.

Yvonne A Buckingham 19 Aug '21

Yvonne Buckingham
Secretary, Alford Valley Community Railway (CBS Number 8486)
Email: avcrsecretary@gmail.com



Donside Community Council

Dear Friends of Haughton Park,

Donside Community Council fully supports the plans of Friends of Haughton Park to build the Haughton Park Pump Track and All Ability Trail.

The rejuvenation and redevelopment of Haughton Park was identified as a need in the Howe of Alford Community Action Plan (2018) under the theme of 'Sports and Recreation Facilities' and Donside Community Council is delighted with the progress made so far .

Our open spaces, being outdoors and being active benefit not only our bodies but our minds too. This is particularly important given the times we are living through. The proposed track will encourage more people to take up cycling as part of a regular exercise regime for both mind and body. In particular our young people need opportunities like this to enjoy some freedom and activity and to bond together in a common interest.

The Pump Track, will be the only one of its kind in our area and will give riders, novice and experienced alike, the opportunity to develop and master skills of different styles of biking. Perhaps we may even nurture a future Olympic champion as we have just seen in the BMX competitions at the recent Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The inclusion of an All Ability Trail is equally important as it will ensure that those who have barriers to usual cycling tracks or lack confidence , can also develop their bike skills in a safe environment.

The Haughton Park Pump Track and All Ability Trail will be a welcome asset to our area and will enhance the facilities for residents and visitors, whatever their age and ability level. The track will draw people to our area and play a part in the regeneration of facilities and attractions as they recover from the restrictions of the past eighteen months.

We look forward to the next step and wish you well as you apply for funds to make your plans a reality.

Anne Miller,

Chairperson
Donside Community Council

Tullynessle & Forbes Community And Hall Association



TULLYNESSLE & FORBES COMMUNITY AND HALL ASSOCIATION



LETTER OF SUPPORT RE PROPOSED PUMP TRACK AND ALL ABILITY TRAIL IN HAUGHTON PARK, ALFORD

3, Donview
Bridge of Alford
AB33 8QJ
August 16th 2021

To whom it may concern

The Trustees of Tullynessle and Forbes Community and Hall Association fully support the proposed plans by the Friends of Haughton Park to build a Pump Track and All Ability Trail in Haughton Park, Alford.

This will be a huge asset for the area, welcomed by all ages and abilities, local residents and visitors alike. There is nothing similar that we know of in the area. It will encourage more people to take up cycling, thus benefitting their physical and mental health and enjoyment of life in the outdoors.

After the last 18 months of Covid restrictions the facility will be extra welcomed, particularly by our youth. The All Ability trail will be enjoyed by those who need to gain more confidence and skill before moving onto the Pump Track.

The facility will certainly enhance the facilities in our beautiful Haughton Park and bring many new much needed visitors to our area.

We would like to congratulate Friends of Haughton Park for all their hard work and fundraising in order to bring this fantastic facility to Alford.

Edna Harris

Secretary

Tullynessle and Forbes Community and Hall Association

Chair: Gloria Malcolm; Vice-Chair: Bob Leonard; Secretary: Edna Harris; Treasurer: Alicia Murray